

I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in permitting me to speak on this measure this evening.

I must note in passing as I was listening to my colleague from Indiana I know speak from the heart, but I find irony that he talks about perceived inconsistencies by people on our side of the aisle.

I note that this is the same majority party that would seek to deny the Supreme Court the authority to be able to deal with matters that relate to marriage. They think that that is not appropriate for the Federal court. They do not trust the Supreme Court to deal with these personal issues. But if they are thinking that they can continue with efforts to have government interfere with some of the most painful, personal areas, then they are willing to cast aside consistency and move forward. I have watched as a Member of this Chamber a consistent effort to try and interpose some people's version of what they sincerely believe from the heart, and I respect that.

But I have watched, for instance, in my State, where citizens have struggled with these sensitive issues of end of life. I come from Oregon. I have watched Oregonians struggle with a question of profound significance of how we are going to deal with end-of-life questions; who is going to have control, where is government going to intervene and how far are we going to extend it.

I have watched for 4 years as the Bush administration has tried to overrule the decision of the voters of Oregon, not unelected bureaucrats, not unelected judges. Oregonians, not once, but twice, decided to be the first State in the Union that was going to try and deal with these sensitive personal issues openly and honestly. Because I will tell you that in every State of the Union, every day, decisions are made by physicians and families that end up shortening life, maybe even terminating life.

The difference is in Oregon, that is the first State where we decided we are actually going to have a legal framework that deals with this, that provides guidance. The assisted suicide that we have requires not one but two doctors to work with citizens, to be able to provide a framework, finding among other things that they are at the end of their life, the last 6 months, and that they are not doing this out of an act of desperation or depression.

In fact, there is pretty pervasive evidence that by having this framework and giving people control, there are probably fewer suicides, because people have a sense that they control their own destiny, and that armed with this and a prescription that would end their life, many of them choose not to move forward.

But we have watched the assault against the decision of Oregonians, approved by the voters, by the Bush administration through the courts, that to this point has been thwarted. We found people in this Chamber who have seen fit to criminalize the practice of medicine by injecting the decision of prosecutors to determine the intent of physicians in these most personal of matters. Thus far, at least, it has been resisted.

Well, Madam Speaker, the assault by ideologues and the intolerants who would impose

government on these most personal decisions continues. We have seen it in Florida. This is a case in Florida we have all been following, where the government officials repeatedly have been seeking to intervene over the objection of the husband in this case.

The courts in Florida have seen fit to render judgment, but it is not good enough for folks. They want to go ahead over the objection of the parties involved, and they want to remove this to the Federal courts. As I pointed out, the same people that wanted to deny the authority of the Federal courts to deal with issues; for example, of marriage, to interfere with decisions with which they disagree.

You may not be from Oregon or Florida, but make no mistake, this is a drumbeat to take away the authority of citizens to deal with these most personal of matters. No one will be safe if we allow this path to continue. Families, local courts, voters, are going to be overruled by people in their zeal to tell others how to lead their lives.

I strongly urge that this misguided proposal be rejected.